1: Nimuendaju E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SOS Timbira SOS

584 762 152

the faveira with his bush-knife. In 1936 I was shown the spot and found the tree trunk lying on the ground in decay.

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On the other hand, I know of cases in which a maternal uncle forbade his niece to marry a young lad who was obviously going to be a bad husband. In general, when marriage is in question a girl always consults her mother's brother in addition to her mother. Nyunkré, the daughter of my "sister" Pąrākwę'i, delayed her wedding for nearly half a year, waiting for my return to get my consent, notwithstanding the presence of another maternal uncle who had raised no objections to the marriage. On the other hand, a father never interferes in a girl's amatory or matrimonial affairs.

586 626 837

Even at present these people adhere to the principle that marriage with a virgin is indissoluble except on grounds of adultery and grave maltreatment. If either spouse indicates an intention to rupture the bond, he has to reckon with the disapproval of fellow-members of all the social units to which he belongs: they will publicly condemn him, send him a hąpín or a professional peacemaker, and bear down upon him until he yields. During a hunting trip a wakõkama had fallen in love with a wanton such as is always likely to accompany an expedition of this sort. On his return he did not wish to go back to his wife. The negotiations consumed several days, then two members of his age class seized him by his arms, dragging him at a trot to his wife's house, while the other classmates followed behind, laid him on the bed beside his wife, and made the two intertwine arms and legs. Thus the affair was settled. I witnessed the scene myself; the culprit's face is unforgettable: he almost died of humiliation and offered not the least resistance.

Similarly Pohl writes of the Põrekamekra:

> Ein solches Ehebündnis ist durchaus unauflöslich, und wenn es einem Indianer einfiele, sich von seinem Weibe zu trennen, was schon einigen in den Sinn kam, besonders wenn die Weiber früh alterten, so widersetzt sich die ganze Gemeinde einem solchen Vorhaben, und alle alten Indianer, deren Autorität von den jüngeren sehr geachtet wird, verhalten den Sträflichen zur Ordnung.[108]

PROHIBITED UNIONS

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For the present Indians the principle of moiety exogamy is hardly of consequence any more, but marriage between relatives of the first and second degree in the ascending or descending line is tabooed. When I encountered one instance of cross-cousin marriage while constructing the diagrams illustrating name transference, my informant explained, "Yes, there are human beings as shameless as that!" The union of persons connected by the hąpín bond is likewise prohibited.

SORORATE AND LEVIRATE

587 667

I know of not a single case of a widower's marrying his deceased wife's sister, though in at least one instance this would have been easily possible. This is all the more remarkable because of the considerable familiarity permitted toward a wife's sister even from the period of betrothal on, so that I was sometimes in doubt which of the sisters was the wife. In 1930 the Rąmkõ'kamekra had pretty well decided on marrying me to Iromkré as soon as her term of office as vų'tę' would terminate. Since this was not before 1933 I feigned ignorance of their intentions. Iromkré herself was quite sure of the part assigned to her, but as a vų'tę' was obliged to maintain the proper reserve. On the other hand, her greatest pleasure was to throw her sister Kentapí and me together for playful social intercourse, which her mother obviously encouraged. Subsequently, a year before the close of her term, Iromkré married the second commandant of the kapranpotíkama, Kapērtuk.

[108] Reise, 2:196.

1: Nimuendaju E-S (1929-1936) 1946 SO8 Timbira SO8

deceased than she quite suddenly falls to blubbering rhythmically for several minutes. Such lamentation is indispensable if some tribesman arrives whom the mourner has not seen since her loss or who has been away for some time. In the latter case—as whenever I myself return—another idea coöperates: sympathy with the homecoming traveler, who is supposed to have been exposed to all manner of privations, maltreatment, and dangers during his absence. He seats himself on the mat as described above, his kinswomen lay their heads or arms against his shoulder and bawl in the way indicated, actually shedding tears, and some of them working themselves into a profound state of excitement. On one occasion a mother gave vent to sentiments of despondent grief when she caught sight of a feather ornament given me by her daughter, who had died during my absence.

During major festivals lamentations of this sort are always to be heard emanating from some house or other: The inmates remember some dead relative who would have played a part in the present proceedings if still alive or recall a child on whom the role should have devolved. At major log races I have several times seen some age class throw down the log and then at once trot over to the maternal home of their deceased champion runner in order to join his relatives in bewailing him.

DIVISION OF LABOR

As superficial observers are wont to do, Fróes Abreu alleges that Rąmkõ'kamekra men lead a life of idleness while women labor.[209] As stated in the relevant sections, all hard work—the clearing of woods, hunting, war—devolves solely on the men, who moreover take part in a series of supplementary activities. It is true that the development of agriculture, the recession of the chase, and the elimination of war have increased feminine work and diminished masculine obligations. On the other hand, women hardly gather wild fruits any more and the construction of more substantial houses, along with the rise of a by no means insignificant home industry has added to masculine labor. Abreu declares that the women manufacture baskets and mats (p. 180), yet pictures a matmaking man (p. 58)! His statement holds only for certain special types of basketry; others and also mats, the most important article for trade, are never made by women. Burity mats, large, rectangular food bags and lidded suspension pouches are for the most part of Rąmkõ'kamekra, in small measure of Apą'nyekra, provenience. They are found in pretty nearly all houses of the central interior of Maranhão and especially in the shops of Barra do Cordo. This industry fails to develop more rapidly for the solitary reason that all trading between the Rąmkõ'kamekra and the whites is aimed at mutual cheating.

The most one can say is that as the children's caretaker and the sole laborer at domestic chores woman is more constantly employed than man. In any case she is far too independent by virtue of her social status to turn into an idle husband's beast of labor.

DIVORCE

Only a few reasons warrant the rupture of marriage with a virgin—barrenness, grave maltreatment, and adultery. As for the first-mentioned ground, I know of only one case, and even there I gained the impression that the wife's sterility was a pretext rather than the real reason. Excessive abuse of a woman led to divorce in a few instances, all of them the result of alcoholism. Adultery on either side is the commonest reason, though, as among the Apinayé, many spouses are willing to overlook a mate's straying from the narrow path. However, Abreu exaggerates beyond all reason in alleging that "as Canellos desconhecem a fidelidade conjugal"

[209] Fróes Abreu, Terra das Palmeiras, 179.

11 Nimuendajú E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SO8 Timbira SO8

(p. 179). A Neobrazilian is naturally struck by the Timbira's lack of that jealousy so excessively developed in his own society and practically the basis of sex life there. From this difference he draws conclusions for the Indians that would hold for himself.

CHASTITY

Yet the Rąmkõ'kamekra women unquestionably have an ideal of conjugal fidelity; without it, indeed, the grass widow's seclusion and mourning would be inconceivable, nor would adultery figure as a ground for divorce. Couples who have grown old together without ever separating are held up as paragons for the younger generation, and there is a fair number of such models in the tribe. The failure of many to attain the ideal does not disprove its existence. What characterizes Timbira in contrast to Neobrazilian notions of matrimony is the recognition of cases in which extramarital intercourse is not merely allowed but reckoned laudable and honorific, for example the exchange of wives by two kwų'nõ or the role of the two precentresses in peacemaking. Further, since the child's welfare is a primary consideration, a mother must confess extramarital relations during the period of pregnancy in order that the adulterer may be secluded synchronously with the husband, both being thereby publicly acknowledged as fathers. This custom presupposes the husband's ability to bear the avowal with equanimity—an idea utterly opposed to Neobrazilian sentiment.

Finally such an attitude is possible only among such a people as the Rąmkõ'kamekra, where the individual seems to exist mainly in order to function in a dozen distinct units in accordance with traditional prescriptions, where the supreme social commandment is at any cost to avoid internal dissension. The Timbira define "good" and "bad" men accordingly. He is "bad" who quarrels with tribesmen, insists on personal privileges, will not yield his claims—in short, acts like a kupẽ (Neobrazilian). A "good" man is one who, irrespective of the obvious justice of his case, meets another halfway, not from fear, but in order to avoid dispute; *that* is acting "like us Indians." Tompey (to agree) is the highest social virtue. Further, the ceremonial from which no person can absent himself in many ways forces disputants into coöperative activities.

Mere suspicion is not held adequate to raise the charge of adultery, which can be established only by an eyewitness. Whenever the subject is broached, the first question asked is, "Have you seen it yourself?" The general aversion to disputes discourages informants: anyone who catches someone else's spouse *in flagrante delicto* maintains a discreet silence. Moreover, if the affair comes under discussion, this is restricted to the spouses and their kin; the fellow culprit is never, so far as I know, summoned for a reckoning.

I took cognizance of a fair number of occurrences of adultery. One day Wakái, a hąpín of mine, had an irrefutable proof of his wife Kañõ's infidelity. Taking his belongings, he left the house, halted in the space in front of it, and declared why he was acting thus. He spoke just loud enough to be heard by the neighbors, but with calm moderation. Kañõ was genuinely grieved over this consequence of her intrigue. No sooner had her husband departed than she was never seen outside her dwelling. Her relatives, the man's age class, and sundry others—I myself was asked to collaborate as Wakái's hąpín—all exerted themselves to patch up the difficulty and a week later the two were peaceably reunited.

In another case, a woman named Pyẽkára was a notorious adultress, but her husband, otherwise no weakling, ignored her waywardness because he was afraid of otherwise being separated from his dearly beloved child.

1: Nimuendajú E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SOS Timbira SOS

837 562 554 virgins; the group further comprises all divorcées and widows who do not as soon as possible enter another fixed union. Irrespective of those who were formerly wantons and subsequently became permanently married, Ponto has twelve to fifteen members of this class. They are not regarded as outcasts nor is their mode of life condemned as vicious. They arouse public displeasure only if they lure men away from their wives, and even then the man is held solely responsible. Privately and publicly the wantons are on a footing of equality in their relations with virgins and married women; they are simply not models and have certainly failed to live up to the ideal.

It took me considerable time to determine the identity of the wantons, for their behavior is devoid of impudence or boldness, even in talking with the bachelors of the tribe. To them, too, the Timbira principle applies that a man is helpless against a woman's aversion, so that there is no question of any coercion or of a wanton's obligation to yield to a man coveting her. On the contrary, they choose their lovers and, what is more, mostly in an extraordinarily discreet manner. Usually the wanton gets her brother to ask the young man she favors to bring her a piece of some game animal or something of the sort. If he consents, he immediately suggests through the intermediary a rendezvous at a specified spot in the steppe or the woods at a certain time. Thither he takes his gift and receives his reward.

837 585 Most of the wantons soon establish so permanent a relationship with their lovers as to create the impression of ceremonially wedded wives as soon as the man sleeps in her matrilineal home. Indeed, especially after the birth of children, they come to be regarded as such. So far as I was able to observe, this is even the most frequent form of union nowadays. Only a small minority fully exercise their right to take up with any man they wish. Such happenings as Von den Steinen describes for the Bororo[88] are not possible among the Timbira.

The lovers supply their mistresses in the manner stated with gifts, especially victuals, but also with other objects. If the present is such as to be unsuitable for the girl, she will turn it over to her brother, who is usually cognizant of her amours and figures as her natural protector and counselor.

[848] A pregnant wanton names all the men with whom she has had sexual relations during pregnancy, thus enabling them all to go into seclusion in the infant's interests (p. 107).

834 837 At present not a single wanton pays the least attention to moiety exogamy. My impression is that it was these wantons who first transgressed the rule and that people came to regard union with one of these girls as the normal form of matrimony.

DESIRE FOR CHILDREN

562 842 The more children parents have, the better they like it. Since there is sex equality neither boys nor girls are preferred. In 1936 six girls happened to be born one after the other, a circumstance that attracted general attention, but no unfavorable comment.

● 586 842 A man would leave the wife he had married as a virgin provided she proved barren. I do not know how far this was a mere pretext, for I know two childless couples who have not the least intention of separating for that reason.

782 In order to effect conception a woman breaks the egg of some bird, preferably that of a *Tinamus* species, and rubs the yolk on her body. Others invoke the sun: Smearing urucú on the palms of their hands, they go outside the village in the morning, raise their hands toward the rising sun and pray: "kedti! iymãiykra ño,

[88] Von den Steinen, Naturvölkern, 388 f.

1: Nimuendajú 8-3 (1929-1935) 1946 SCS Timbira SCS

586 842 782 wakukrá iykapeáne." That is, approximately: "Grandfather! Give me a child so that I may be able to eat with him." Then the suppliant spreads the urucú on the inside of her thighs.

Kentapí did not take that much trouble. One morning she was sitting at home against the wall, eating some food from a gourd bowl, while the sun was shining in at the door, directly in front of her feet. She set down her bowl, stretched out both palms horizontally toward the sun, like a begging child, and without getting up said in a low tone: "pa'pám! iymã iykra ñoñgõ! pa'pám iykaprẽ', marwa'tẽ iykrí napé. Ka, iykaprẽne iymã iykrareñoñgõ, vamẽ iypa!" ("Our Father! Give me a child! Our Father, take pity on me, I am sitting here alone, eating. You, pity me, give me a child to eat with me!") On my request she subsequently repeated the words. "I wonder whether he will listen to your prayer?" I asked. "Surely," she answered, "look at Iromkré [Kentapí's younger sister], she also invoked him and is already pregnant." However, it was three years before Kentapí's prayer was fulfilled.

145 843 847 It is a striking fact that the girls of this tribe never have children before, and only several years after, marriage. This is regarded as normal by the Indians themselves, and the above-mentioned Iromkré, who conceived immediately after marriage, was considered exceptional. She was fifteen as a primipara, and her mother told me that she was really too young to bear children. Abortives, if used at all, are exceptional; nor, in my opinion, can the means employed to prevent menstruation be responsible for the lateness of pregnancy in the light of the earliness of sexual intercourse. For this purpose a girl will seat herself on a steppe tree the Neobrazilians call pau pombo (*Tapirira* sp.?) or drink the infusion of the scraped bark of pau candeia (*Cassia* sp.), which is also considered an abortive.

In any case Snethlage probably underestimates the age of mothers in setting that of Ramkõ'kamekra girls who already had a child at barely twelve;[88] or, possibly the child he had in mind was not the offspring of the girl with her. The youngest mother I saw was certainly Iromkré, whose age was between fourteen and fifteen.

OLD AGE

561 576 888 Old people are esteemed; a junior would not venture to address them by name as though they were of his own age, but will always apply a kinship term, calling them kedti or tụ'ire (grandparent) even if there is no blood relationship. Children and young people never try to converse with their elders unsolicited; even when they have to make some communication to them, they usually remain standing before them in silence until asked to speak. In meeting old people on a narrow path, the younger ones make way to let them pass. I have never heard the frailty of old age derided or mocked. Old Krithị', though already hard of hearing and very myopic, would insist on occasionally going to the creek five to six kilometers beyond the village to try his luck as an angler. On these trips he went astray several times on the numerous trails crisscrossing the steppe and was unable to find his way home. Then his grandsons or great-nephews trotted in his wake like hunting-dogs and jubilantly led him back by the hand.

886 623 887 I have pointed out (p. 94) that after a period of some forty years of athletic life all men of an age class ceremonially and automatically drop out of the sports activities to enter the council, which constitutes the real governing body of the tribe since the chiefs undertake nothing without their advice. Further, I have explained by many illustrations that after any ceremonial retreat a person must present himself to this assemblage before being reckoned a full-fledged member of society again,

[88] Snethlage, Reise, 463.